

REDEEMING THE UNCLEAN

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“And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck.”
Exodus 13:13

WE read to you in the former part of the service the origination of the law of God by which the first-born, both of man and beast, belonged to the Most High. That law seemed to be a very admirable memorial of what the Lord did, and also a very just requirement on the part of God, that the first-born, whom He had so miraculously delivered, should be His through all time.

But the difficulty arose as to how some beasts, which were counted unclean by the law, could be offered to God at all. There were many animals necessary to man, useful for draught, and so forth, but not coming under the list of clean animals, such as divided the hoof and chewed the cud. Among the rest, the ass, useful everywhere, but most of all in oriental countries, was counted unclean.

How, then, could it be dedicated to God? How could the first-born of the ass be given to Him? Our text solves the difficulty. An exchange was made. A lamb was offered instead, and then the ass, of course, was redeemed. Or if the owner did not sufficiently value it to give a lamb instead, then the neck was broken and the animal destroyed.

The teaching of the text is just as follows. It is fourfold and I think we shall have to bring out each fold. Of course, it is typical of something to do with ourselves and Christ, and our standing before God.

And the first observation is this, that—

I. AS THE ASS, BEING UNCLEAN, WAS NOT ACCEPTABLE TO GOD, EVEN SO, UNRENEWED MAN, BEING UNCLEAN, IS ALSO UNACCEPTABLE BEFORE THE MOST HIGH.

Did it ever strike you that man, according to the Jewish ceremonial law, is an unclean creature? Nothing was clean, according to the law of Moses, but that which divided the hoof and chewed the cud. Now man fails in one of these, and by the law he is put down as a sinner, as being on a level with the unclean beasts.

What a wonder the Gospel does for us when, being redeemed with a price, we are said to be the sheep of God, the lambs of Christ's flock, so that therein we bear the same name as the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and we are raised from the condition of the brute, into which sin brought us, and are made to sit far above principalities and powers, in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus! Lost by sin through the law and placed in the very depths, man, by grace through Jesus Christ, is lifted up to the very heights.

But we return to what we started with, namely, that man has become, through sin, like the ass, a creature incapable of rendering acceptable service to God. For, in the first place, *every man has already broken the law of God* and as God accepts no service but that which is, like Himself, perfect, no unrenewed man is capable of rendering perfect legal obedience such as God can accept.

His law is like a superb crystal vase. If it is whole, it is whole. But if it is chipped or cracked in the smallest degree, the law is broken. It is like a great golden chain which is precious and useful while whole, but the snapping of one link breaks the chain. So, unless a man could keep God's law without any defect or transgression, it would not be possible that he could be accepted of the Most High.

Now there is not one of us but has certainly broken some command. I fear we have all of us broken all the commands, if not in act, yet in word or in thought, so that before God's bar we ought to plead guilty to every count in the indictment and should not hope to be accepted by our works.

What a condemning text is that in Isaiah—"We are altogether as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags"! He does not say that all our wickednesses are so—no, these are worse and baser still—but all our righteousnesses are—that is, the best thing which unrenewed nature can possibly produce is nothing better than the rag which is too filthy to be seen, but must be cast away and burned in the fire.

Yes, you that seek to be justified by your good works, you may pant, and strive, and wear out your lives in energetic failures, but success is entirely impossible. You cannot thus, while you are what you are, produce a righteousness that God can accept, seeing that you have sinned already.

In addition to this, *man's heart is alienated*. We would not ourselves accept a service done us by an enemy, or that is done without any motive of repentance. No, since the very essence of obedience lies in the yielding up of the heart, until a man's heart is made new, till he loves the God whom he has despised, all that he can do is but the false serving of a hypocrite, the dead service of a formalist, or the forced service of a slave, and none of these can God accept.

Do you think when the ungodly man repeats a prayer, and his heart is absent, that God accepts the prayer? I tell you that that prayer is in itself a sin and a great provocation against the Most High. When the ungodly man stands with God's people and pretends to be one of them, repeats their creeds, and declares himself to be a believer in the things which he does not believe, he does but lie before God and the things he says cannot be received by Him.

All outward, external religion, in which the heart does not join, so far from being received by the Most High with approbation, must be viewed by Him with utter abhorrence. How is it possible, then, for a man who loves not God to be accepted before the King of Kings?

In, addition to this, there is no service which unrenewed man can render *which is not defiled with sin, even in itself*, chiefly with one sin, namely, self-righteousness. If a man works works of righteousness with the idea that he is meriting a reward, thereby, to whom is he a servant? I answer, not to God, but to himself. If I obey, or profess to obey, the law of God, but my whole motive is that I may save myself, and that I may get happiness unto myself, evidently self is the reigning principle. I am not truly obedient to God as the great delight of my spirit. I do not love Him with heart, and soul, and strength, but I love myself, and cover up this selfishness with the pretence that I love Him.

Oh! you that are thus striving to serve yourselves under some spiritual garb or other, you cannot serve the living God, do what you will. Your holiest service will be an offense, a smoke in His nostrils, and He will put away your best things as being offered with strange fire, and therefore, not to be received.

Once more. *By very nature, man is so obnoxious to the wrath of God that it is impossible for God to accept him as His creature*. Kings would not delight to be served by men with foul hands who left defilement everywhere. Yet such are we. We would not like to always have before our eyes, in our servants, some dreadful disease, some disgusting leprosy, and yet such is the disease of sin.

"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity." I have heard that text quoted, "Thou canst not look upon it but with abhorrence." That is true, but it is put stronger still. The prophet puts it, that He cannot look upon it, that He cannot endure it. He is a consuming fire towards sinners and what He will do with the finally impenitent is, so He says, "tear them in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver," for out of Christ, God cannot tolerate the ungodly.

Not for a single hour would He spare this world, were it not that the Mediator comes between—else the immaculate perfection of the eternal God could not endure sin to be anywhere within His reach. He must sweep the universe clear of every rebel with the besom of destruction, would, once for all ease Himself of His adversaries and shake Himself from His enemies, even as a man shakes the dust from his feet.

Now what a very solemn truth this is! Do not think that it is my statement. It is really the teaching of God's Word, that the unregenerate man is an unclean man and cannot be acceptable to God. "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God." The unrenewed man is corrupt. He is dead in trespasses and sins.

Now this is meant for some of you. It is meant for some of you who are very excellent and amiable people, and very moral. It is meant not for the vilest of the vile alone, but for all classes and conditions of men—for the professedly religious people too, unless your hearts are right before the Lord and you have believed in Jesus. You cannot, you never can, strive as you will, be received before the Most High, any more than the ass could be acceptable upon the altar of God.

But now we advance to the second truth which is in the text, namely, that—

II. THE SERVICE OF MAN, WHICH GOD CANNOT ACCEPT, IS, NEVERTHELESS, GOD'S DUE.

God could not receive the donkey because it was unclean, but still it belonged to God for all that. God's claim extended over all the first-born, clean or unclean, and that claim must be maintained.

Sinner, you cannot serve God—you are too sinful. Your heart too evil—your service too impure. But still, God's claim upon you for a perfectly holy life has not ceased. It has not lost its power, nor bated one jot or tittle of its just and righteous force. It has been laid down by some theologians as being almost a self-evident truth that God will require no more of a man than he can do—but this, by every thoughtful mind—will be soon discovered to be a self-evident lie instead of being true—for God's law is not changed by our being changed.

Whatever God demanded of man when he was perfect, He demands the selfsame thing of him now that he is imperfect. The law of God is holy, and just, and good. If it were ever too severe, then God was not righteous in making it, and if He alters it to suit us, what is that but the cutting down of His integrity and the disfiguring of the tables of His own perfectly pure and holy statute book? It must not be.

You, in common life, know very well that a man is sometimes bound to do what he cannot do. If a man is in your debt, and he tells you he cannot pay you, you do not consider that his not being able to pay exonerates him from the debt. He is still in your debt. If he could have paid when he entered upon the debt, it was a debt—and now that he cannot pay it, it is still a debt.

True, there are ways in which he can get cleared of the debt, just as there are ways of salvation by which a man may be delivered from sin, but still the debt is none the less a debt because the man cannot pay it. Everybody knows that inability to pay does not exonerate the man from the duty to pay. So with God. He did not make you a sinner, sinner. You were pure and holy when you come from His hands. Your sin is your own. Your weakness, inability, your willfulness, your backwardness to keep the law—all these are your own, and so far from excusing you, they shall be swift witnesses against you to condemn you.

Take another instance. There are some men who have become such thieves that we say of them, and say truly, that it is impossible for them to be honest. They are no sooner out of prison than their hand is into somebody's pocket—they cannot be easy and at rest till they are up before the magistrate again. But did you ever hear such a man say, "Sir, I cannot be honest. I have such an irresistible tendency to steal that the law ought to be changed on my account, because I have lost my principle of honesty—therefore the law ought not to bind me"? "No," you say, "but he ought to be kept in prison always, for this is another offense to make your evil heart an excuse for your evil ways."

Recollect, sinner, that your inability to come to Christ is not your misfortune, but your sin. Your inability to keep the law of God is not your calamity as much as it is your willful wickedness. Inasmuch as you are unclean and evil, the thought that you cannot help it should alarm you, for you ought to help it. You have no business to be in the state of sin you now are. If you could not help it, if there were any physical disability, you might be excused. But inasmuch as the disability is spiritual and moral, and deals with your will, there is no excuse for you. The ass could not be accepted, but still the ass belonged to God. You cannot be received as you are, all unconverted, but still God has a claim upon you, and for

every idle word that you shall speak shall He bring you into judgment—and for not serving Him, He will condemn you. For not believing in Christ, you shall be called to account at the last.

But I must pass on. The third thing in the text is this, that the difficulty in hand was met in this way—the ass must be God's, yet it cannot be, for it is too impure for Him to receive. What then?

III. IT MUST BE REDEEMED BY A SUBSTITUTE.

“Every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb.” Oh! the glorious Gospel comes out here in much of its effulgence in connection with the redemption of men. The Jew would, perhaps, deliberate awhile. “Well,” he might say, “I fancy I should like to have this ass grown up, for I need it as a beast of burden. But here is a lamb that must be killed in its stead, and that is the more valuable of the two.”

I fancy I can hear a consultation held in the family as to what should be done. It may be that in some cases the lamb would be the less precious of the two. However that may be, it is agreed at the last that the lamb shall die and that the ass shall live.

Now, in our case, there might have been a consultation, indeed, as to which was the more precious—our poor, willful, wicked selves or the Lamb of God, the Only-Begotten of the Father. All of us put together, and millions upon millions of our human race, could never equal in value the precious Lord Jesus. If you were to put in all the angels as well, and all the creatures that God has ever made, they could not equal Him who is the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His person.

“Yet he spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.” And this is the Gospel which we have to preach to you every time we stand before you, namely, that Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God, was offered to God as a substitute for ungodly, unclean, unacceptable man. That we might not die, Christ died. That we might not be cursed, Jesus was cursed and fastened to the tree. That we might be received, He was rejected. That we might be approved, He was despised—and that we might live forever He bowed His head and gave up the ghost.

If any man wants to understand theology, he had better begin here. This is the first and main point. I do not think I should dispute with any of my brethren in the ministry upon what else they hold if they all hold purely and straightforwardly the doctrine of substitution by Jesus Christ on the behalf of His own elect people.

Martin Luther stood out for justification by faith, and rightly so, for in his day that seemed to be the center, where all the battle raged. I think that just now substitution by Christ seems to be the place where the garments are rolled in blood and where the fight is thickest. That Jesus Christ was punished in the sinner's stead—that the wrath which was due to His people was endured by Him, that He drank the cup of bitterness which they ought to have drained, is the grandest of all truths, and so sublime a truth that if all the Christians in the world were to be burned in one dreadful holocaust, the price would be but little to maintain this precious doctrine in its integrity upon the face of the earth.

Now most men know that they are to be saved by Christ, but I am afraid—but I am afraid that it is not always preached plainly, so that men know how it is that Christ saves them. My dear hearer, I would not have you go away without knowing this. Christ Jesus came into the world to take the sins of His people upon Himself and to be punished for them.

Well, if Christ was punished for them, they could not be punished afterwards. Christ's being punished in their stead was the full discharge of their debt which they owed to divine justice, and they are sure to be saved. They for whom Christ died as a substitute can no more be damned than Christ Himself can be. It is not possible that hell can enclose them, or else where are the justice and the integrity of God?

Does He demand the man, and then take a substitute, and then take the man again? Does He demand the payment of our debt, and receive that payment at the hand of Christ, and then arrest us a second time for the same debt? Then, in the great court of King's Bench in heaven, where is justice? The honor of God, the faithfulness of God, the integrity of God are certain warrants to every soul for whom Christ died, that if Christ died for him, he shall not die, but shall be exempt from the curse of the law.

“How then,” says one, “may I know that Christ died for my soul?” Sir, do you trust Him? Will you trust Him now? If so, that is the mark of His redeemed. This is the King’s mark upon His treasure. This is the mark of the great Sheep-Master upon every one of those whom He has bought with blood. If you will take Him to be the unbuttressed pillar of your salvation, if you will build upon Him as the sole foundation of your everlasting hope, then you are His, and as for your sins, they are laid on Him.

As for your righteousness, you have none of your own, but Christ’s righteousness is yours. As in the case before us, the lamb was offered—the ass was spared. The unclean animal lived—the clean creature died. There was a change of places. So does Christ change places with the sinner. Christ puts Himself in the sinner’s place and what do we read? “He was numbered with the transgressors,” and being numbered with the transgressors, what then? Why, He was put to death as a transgressor. They crucified Him between two malefactors. He had to suffer the death of a felon, and though in Him was no sin, yet, “the LORD hath made to meet upon him the iniquities of us all.”

He was, before God, the representative of all His people, and all the sins of His people covered Him until He had drunk the cup of wrath, and then He threw off the horrible incubus of His people’s sins, and cast the stupendous load of the guilt of all His elect down into the sepulchre, and there left it buried forever, while in His rising He gave to them the pledge and earnest of their acquittal and of their everlasting life.

Ah! my hearers, I wish I had a thousand tongues with which to proclaim this one truth! As I have not, I ask the tongues of all those who know its preciousness to tell it forth. Tell the sick, tell the dying, tell the young, tell the old, tell sinners of every degree and every class, that salvation is not by what they do, nor by what they feel, but that it all lies in that man who was once crucified, but who now lives in the power of an endless life before the eternal throne.

And if they say, “What do you mean by this?” tell them that this man is none other than God over all, blessed forever, and that He condescended to become man and take upon Himself the sins of His people, and to be punished for their guilt, so that whosoever believes on Him might not perish, but have everlasting life. The just for the unjust, He died to bring us to God.

This is the Gospel—the core, the kernel, the marrow of the entire Bible. You may say of all the Book besides, that it is but folds and wrappings—but this is what it wraps up—substitution by Christ. This is but the box, the casket—it is Christ that is the jewel, the treasure for which the casket was made. Believe this truth. Believe it as a doctrine, but better still, cast your souls on it, and say, “If it be so, then I will trust in the power of Him who loved, and lived, and died for sinners that I might go free.”

The last truth of God in the text is a very solemn one, namely, that—

IV. THE UNREDEEMED MAN MUST DIE.

The unredeemed ass was put to a speedy and very ignominious death. “Thou shalt break its neck.” There was no bringing of it to the altar, but it must be as thing obnoxious, smitten with the axe and left. There is no choice for any man, woman, or child here, except this. If you trust in Christ, you are redeemed, and you shall live. If you do not, there is something worse for you than the breaking of the neck of the poor ass.

When they break its neck, it is done—just a pang and a struggle, and it is over. But it is not over with us when the time comes to execute the righteous sentence of the law, if Christ has not suffered that sentence for us, and we are found unbelievers in Him. Then, first of all, the soul is torn from the body—the body left here, the soul to appear before God, and then it receives already the foretokens of its last and ultimate doom.

It is driven from God’s presence to abide as a naked spirit in utter wretchedness. When our Lord pictures the death of the rich man, He does not talk about any sleep, but He says, “In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments.” He was one moment on earth, but the next moment in hell. There the soul must continue till the resurrection comes, and then the soul must come back to the body, and body and soul together must stand in that great gathering where every eye shall see the pierced One and behold Him in His glory.

Then the great and final sentence shall be pronounced and to the unregenerate it will be this—"Then shall he say to those on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

I tremble while I speak thus, but you must hear it, lest you feel it. And we must speak it, lest we be found guilty of your soul's blood. In the name of the living God, I speak to every one to whom this voice can come. You must have Christ die for you, or you must die forever. It must be either Calvary or hell—one of the two. His blood must be sprinkled upon your conscience, or else your blood shall be upon your own head. It is with you tonight—turn or burn—believe or perish.

For I do assure you, according to the teaching of the Word of God and of His Holy Spirit, that there is not the shadow of a hope anywhere else for you. You may belong to some church and you may hope to be saved by your baptism or by your confirmation, but these are useless apart from Christ. You may attend some meeting house, and you may think to be saved because you are very orthodox, but your orthodoxy will perish with you, and will only be firewood for your burning if you trust to that.

Perhaps you think that leaving something in your will at the last to some charity, or giving liberally to the poor, may cover a multitude of sins, and that with such a covering as Achan used when he covered up the wedge of gold that God's eye might not see the unholy thing. But Achan died, notwithstanding that he had covered up his ill-gotten wealth—and so will you.

Ah! if an angel should come here tonight, and speak, perhaps you would listen to him more intently than you would to me. But what could he tell you more simple than this, that there is but one hope for you, and that one hope neglected, there is no hope, no hope, no hope forever? God has been pleased to commit this ministry, not unto angels, but unto us—poor men like yourselves—that we may tell you with affection, that we may speak to you with sympathy.

Why will you die? You know what pain is, do you not? You have suffered enough already. Some of you have to endure the biting pangs of hunger. You are sometimes cold and poverty brings you very low. Will you be everlastingly poor? Will you forever endure the pangs and miseries infinitely worse than any you have known in this world? I am not inventing bugbears to frighten you. God forbid! I am only telling you what I have read in God's Word and what you yourselves may see to be there.

"Except ye repent," said Christ, "ye shall all likewise perish." Why need you perish? Why must you perish? Jesus Christ is preached to you and we say to you tonight, in the name of the Most High—Whosoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool, if you do but trust Him.

Though you have gone ever so far into sin, yet simple faith in Christ will bring you out of it. And though your sins should be ingrained in your nature and should have become such a habit to you that you seem no more able to get rid of your abominable habits than the leopard could get rid of his spots, or the Ethiopian of his black skin—yet such is the miraculous power of the blood of Jesus that it can take out the leopard's spots, and remove the blackamoor's hue, and make those white who were once defiled, for it not only takes away the guilt of sin, but the power of sin. If you believe in Christ, you will have a new nature, new desires, new tastes, new enjoyments. You shall hate the things you once loved, and love the things you once hated.

*"'Tis but to trust Immanuel's blood;
'Tis all. 'Tis all."*

"Yes," I hear you say, "but this is too little. It is too easy." Well, and what a mercy that is for you, for if it were a difficult thing, how could you do it? You are precisely in the case of Naaman, when the prophet said to him, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times." "Oh!" said Naaman, "it is too simple." Then his servant said, "My Father, if the prophet had bidden thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather, then, when he said to thee, Wash and be clean?"

The poor Hindu will roll himself over and over for five hundred miles to get to the Ganges, because he has been told that he will get rid of his sin if he thus lies prostrate in the dust the whole painful

journey. Poor soul, he is but like us. We would all do that if we were quite sure that we should be saved by it. How much rather, then, when Christ simply says, “Trust, trust, trust, trust Christ and live. Depend simply upon Him. Rely upon Him.”

Are you not almost sick of hearing me tell you this? We have to iterate and reiterate on this point. We have to bring the hammer down continually on just the same place on the anvil, and to strike just the same note. Ah! well, if you were all saved, and all believed in Christ, we would fain go on to something else—but until every soul is saved, we can do nothing but blow the trumpet with the same sound. Believe. Trust in the Substitute. Take Christ to be yours. Look out of self—look to Christ. Have done with your doings. Have done with your trusting in your own powers, and now, whether you sink or swim, give up every hope besides and rest in Him, and rely on Him, and upon Him alone.

Perhaps these simple words may bring the Gospel home to some aching heart with comfort. And if it should, I pray you to be sure to follow it up at once. Do not put it off. Do not delay! 'Tis resting in Jesus, now—that is the thing.

I call to recollection just now the morning when first I rested on Him. I never, never, never can forget it. I had been as downcast as anyone could be. I had attended places of worship. I had done all I could, but I could get no peace till at last I heard a simple preacher put it thus—“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth.” Now there is nothing to do here but to look—a fool can do that. A babe can do that. You don’t want a deal of learning to do that—you only have to look.

But you will ask what it is that you are to look to. Well, it is, “Look to me”—that is, look to Jesus. There He is in the garden, sweating great drops of blood. Every drop is for you—look to Him. There He is, scourged by Pilate till His shoulders run with gore, and every drop is for you. Look to Him. Look to Him. There He is, fastened to the tree. His hands are streaming with blood and every drop is for you—look to Him. There He is with His side pierced and with the blood and water running out, and every drop is for you. Look to Him. Look to Him. Do but look to Him.

No, it is not to be able to understand it, but to look to Him. No, it is not to be able to write it on paper, but to look to it, look to it. “Well,” said he, when he had gone thus far, “that young man under the gallery there looks very unhappy. I think he is feeling the burden of sin, but he will never get rid of his burden unless he looks to Christ.” Then he shouted, “Look! Look! Look! Young man! Look now!”

Blessed be God, I did look—simply looked, just as the dying men in the wilderness looked to the serpent. They did not calculate the value of the brass. They did not make a drawing of the various convolutions of the serpent. They did not consider how it could be. They did not get a physician to talk to them about how the eye might operate upon the nerves. They just did what they were told to do. They looked, and they lived.

Will you look, or not? Will you trust, or not, young man? On the answer which the Holy Spirit shall enable you to give to that question will hang your present peace and your everlasting happiness. If you answer, “No, I will not look,” then, sirs, on your own heads be your blood if thou wilt not rest in Jesus! So simple, so suitable, so gracious is this way of salvation, that I myself, though I love you in my very soul, must say that you deserve to perish if thou wilt not thus be saved.

*“How they deserve the deepest hell
That slight abounding love;
What chains of vengeance must they feel,
Who scorn these hands of love!”*

Oh! that, instead thereof, you would simply trust, and trusting, you shall live. Amen

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

EXODUS 29:38-46; ISAIAH 53

EXODUS 29:38-46

Verse 38. *Now this is that which you shall offer upon the altar: two lambs of the first year day by day continually.*

Remember, as long as there was a Jewish state, the morning and the evening were to open and to close with the sacrifice of a lamb.

39-42. *The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even: And with the one lamb a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of an hin of beaten oil; and the fourth part of an hin of wine for a drink offering. And the other lamb thou shalt offer at even, and shalt do thereto according to the meat offering of the morning, and according to the drink offering thereof, for a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the Lord. This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee.*

See, the Lamb is the place of meeting. God comes to His people as His people come to Him—with the morning and with the evening lamb.

43. *And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory.*

God's glory is in the lamb—it is there He is pleased to manifest Himself in the glory of His infinite grace to His people.

44-45. *And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, And the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God.*

Not without the lamb, you see—that morning and evening sacrifice must be the token and the way of God's dealing with His people.

46. *And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the LORD their God.*

Now concerning this same lamb, we will read in—

ISAIAH 53

Blessed passage. I hope you all know it by heart—it should be like the alphabet to every child. See how it begins.

Verse 1. *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?*

This is the continual cry of the men of God. The sent ones of God who come to bear testimony of the Lamb of God have no easy time of it. With broken hearts they have to go to their Master, and say, “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?”

2. *For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him.*

Carnal minds never did see beauty in Christ, and never will. Christ as the great sacrifice is always rejected.

3-5. *He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*

Blessed be His name. Some of us can say that with great delight—“With his stripes we are healed.”

6-7. *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth:*

he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

“He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth.” Our blessed Master—there are His seven cries upon the cross, but not one word of murmuring, no complaint against His enemies—“He opened not his mouth: he is brought as the lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”

8-9. *He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.*

10. *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.*

“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him.” If ever there was a man whom God should have protected from every sorrow, and guarded from every stroke of injustice, it was Jesus. And unless it was for sins not His own He suffered, unless it was as a substitute for man, it was the most unjust of all heard of injustices that Christ should die at all.

11-12. *He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

“He shall see of the travail of his soul.” Oh! what a joy is this to us! He did not travail in vain. His pangs were as of a travailing woman, but the birth, the glorious birth that comes of it in the salvation of multitudes—this is His recompense.

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